

Fla. Sheriff Suspended By Askew

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TALLAHASSEE Fla., June 12--Lake County Sheriff Willis McCall, 62, a powerful and controversial law enforcement figure for 28 years, was charged today with second-degree murder in the death of a black prisoner. Gov. Reubin Askew suspended him from office.

A grand jury at Orlando, in neighboring Orange County, charged the sheriff, who is white, with unpremeditated murder in the death of Tommy J. Vickers 37, who had been jailed on a traffic charge and died of peritonitis on April 23, three days after being transferred to a hospital from McCall's jail.

The indictment said McCall kicked Vickers with a "deadly weapon—a shoe or boot."

Citing the same alleged incident on April 13, inside the jail, the grand jury also charged McCall with misdemeanor violations of aggravated battery and aggravated assault. The grand jury had heard 36 witnesses during four days of closed hearings last week.

Askew's suspension order made the same charges but did not base the suspension on the indictments, a technical difference which observers in the capitol saw as an indication that the governor will try to keep McCall out of office even if a trial jury should acquit him on the criminal charges.

Chief jailor Pachel Hood was indicted by the grand jury on an unrelated misdemeanor charge alleging mistreatment of inmates. He was accused of keeping three prisoners naked for 48 hours in a steel-walled cell without furnishing or plumbing and that the prisoners had to sleep, stand and sit in their own body wastes.

The governor did not immediately name a replacement for McCall, whose son, Malcolm McCall, is the chief deputy.

The Florida Senate must consider the suspension, and could act either to remove McCall or reinstate him.

Civil rights groups have opposed McCall for years, but he always won re-election with little difficulty.

In the most publicized incident for which he was attacked, McCall shot two black prisoners in 1951, killing one.